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SUBJECT: GOA Nominates Science Minister Hahn as EU Commissioner

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1.(U) Following a lengthy tug of war between the ruling Social Democrats (SPO) and the conservative People's Party (OVP), the coalition government agreed today on the nomination of Science Minister Johannes Hahn from the OVP as EU Commissioner. Next Tuesday, November 2, the Council of Ministers will officially adopt the decision on Hahn's nomination, subsequently the main committee in parliament will approve the nomination. Then, EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso will be formally notified.

2.(U) Talking to journalists after today's cabinet meeting, OVP Chairman Vice-Chancellor Josef Proell explained it was not entirely clear which portfolio Hahn would get as EU Commissioner. Proell also said that his party would take some time to decide on Hahn's replacement as Science Minister and Vienna OVP Chairman.

Comment

3.(SBU) While the SPO had initially promised the OVP the right to nominate the EU Commissioner - supposedly in return for SPO nominations in the public television and broadcasting system - SPO Chairman Chancellor Werner Faymann lobbied against the possible OVP candidate former Vice-Chancellor Willi Molterer in the course of the past ten days, conceivably due to widespread SPO resentment of Molterer because of his performance in the previous SPO/OVP government. Faymann also tried to push EU Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, a former OVP politician, as his preferred candidate in order to block Molterer. Hahn is a compromise candidate who also suits SPO partisan interests since he will now drop out of the race for the fall 2010 Vienna city elections, and the Vienna OVP will have to find a new top candidate. HOH